



Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission

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October 14, 2011

Ms. Lisa Jackson, Administrator
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
USEPA Headquarters Ariel Rios Building
1200 Pennsylvania Ave, NW
Washington, DC 20460

Dear Administrator Jackson:

The member tribes of the Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission write to support the efforts of the Bristol Bay Tribes in stopping the proposed development of North America's largest open pit gold mine – the Pebble Mine. We believe that the degradation associated with the 896 square mile mining district in the headwaters of the Bristol Bay watershed presents real and unacceptable risk to the natural resources in Bristol Bay.

Among the vast resources of Bristol Bay, there are five species of Pacific Salmon that inhabit the area around the Pebble deposit. The impacts from polluted runoff, toxic releases, altered hydrology, and complete and utter landscape transformation will cause severe and irreparable harm to the ecological functions of the Bristol Bay Watershed, and the greatest commercial salmon fishery in the world. It is unconscionable to allow a resource of such great environmental, economic and cultural value to be lost or damaged.

Here in Washington State we are celebrating the historic removal of Elwha River dams. With this kind of experience in our minds, including the knowledge of what has been lost and the expense to initiate repair, it is unacceptable to allow a start to new projects that we know will cripple a watershed and devastate the natural resources on which we all depend. Too often tribes find themselves at the fore front of these battles in an effort to defend their rights and cultures. The Bristol Bay Watershed is the homeland of native people; the lands, waters, fish and wildlife are central to their survival. It took leadership and a commitment to begin dam removal on the Elwha – it will take the same to protect Bristol Bay from the short-term economic gain of mining.

Purpose and leadership from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) will be necessary to stop the planned Pebble Mine. Specifically, tribes are requesting the EPA to use its authority under Section 404(c) of the Clean Water Act to prohibit the discharge of dredged or fill material from the proposed Pebble Mine. Further we request EPA to step forward and lead federal action on this project to a result that will protect this incredible landscape and resource for the future.

Sincerely,

Billy Frank, Jr.
Chairman

cc: Dennis McLerran, Administrator EPA Region 10
The Honorable Senator Maria Cantwell
The Honorable Senator Patty Murray